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ABSTRACT

It is hypothesized in this study that given an understanding of the educational value levels of students, instructors could modify their teaching methods to accommodate various levels reflected in their classes. Six value systems for both teachers and students are identified: (1) tradition oriented; (2) individualistic; (3) structured; (4) scientific; (5) group oriented; and (6) meaning oriented. Instructors participating in this research project were given questionnaires for themselves and their students designed to clarify individual learning and teaching styles and preferences. Upon completion of the questionnaires, norms for the student population and the faculty were generated. Results of these findings are presented in tabular form, and several case studies are presented to exemplify difficulties caused by poor matching between teaching styles and learning styles. It is suggested that the use of value level plus cognitive style would produce an instrument that would identify appropriate teaching methodology and study skills for each value level. (JD)

THE LEARNING IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL VALUE CONFLICTS BETWEEN STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS

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PROBLEM

Existing within the student/teacher population of the public schools and universities in the United States is an extremely wide range of values toward education. Proponents of "back-to-the basics" and "futurism" can be found teaching in the same building. Students who want to be spoon-fed instruction sit alongside of others who expect the instructor to point out the direction for learning and then get out of their way so they can do their own thing.

Recognizing this wide spread in values, the author attempted to investigate the impact of this phenomenon on the learning that took place at an inner-city community college.

INSTRUMENT

In order to determine value levels within the college a questionnaire was utilized which asked both students and teachers to complete eight statements relative to education. On the questionnaire completions are suggested for each of the eight statements. Respondents were asked to numerically weight the completion(s) that most nearly expressed their own values. One of the eight statements used in the questionnaire is given below:

To me, education in our country should be designed to:

____ . be an unstructured process where people have the opportunity to acquire any knowledge that is important to them.

____ . be a fairly structured system, where requirements are clearly defined and students should take the courses prescribed by the school.

____ . give people the skills they need to survive in this "dog-eat-dog" world of ours.

____ . provide good teachers who are able to guide and direct students in the path that is best for them.

____ . help people understand their basic humanness and teach people to live together in a spirit of brotherhood.

____ . meet individual career needs and give students the tools they need to be financially successful in life.

Other topics on the questionnaire deal with grading, classroom rules, relationship to other class members, motivation, testing and teacher behavior.

THEORY

The Values for Learning questionnaire is based on the theory of "Levels of Human Existence" devised by Clare Graves.[1] Graves has identified seven levels of understanding that impact the manner in which individuals cope with their world. The theory has been applied to numerous areas of social concern, i.e. rahabilitation counseling,[2] nursing,[3] and marriage.[4] It has had its widest application in the field of business management. The Center for Values Research, in Dallas, Texas has made practical use of the theory to assist managers in learning to relate to employees and to each other in ways that improve communication and morale thus ultimately improving profits for the company.[5]

Graves feels the theory can be as advantageously applied to education as it can to business. In fact, in his article in the Futurist, Graves gives special attention to both of these possible applications of his theory. Graves suggested use of the theory for education is to place students in classes or schools specifically designed for each level. The author chose not to investigate that particular use of the theory. Rather the author hypothesized that given an understanding of the value levels of students, instructors could modify their teaching methods to accommodate various levels reflected in their classes. The value levels identified by Graves and modified by the author for use in an educational setting are shown on page three.

METHOD

With the assistance of the college's staff development committee, a plan was devised to administer the questionnaire to all 10:00 and 5:00 MWF classes. Participating instructors were given packets containing questionnaires for themselves and their students. Student questionnaires were anonymous although each questionnaire was identified by class and student major. The Values for Learning questionnaire was administered to 1600 students and 90 faculty members of the college. Upon completion of the questionnaires norms for the student population and the faculty were generated with the assistance of the Center for Values Research.

RESULTS

Table one displys the norms for students of the college and table two for teachers. In general students were more Tradition-Oriented and less Meaning-Oriented than were instructors. Although considerable difference can be seen between the averages of students and teachers an even greater disparity can be noted when comparing the scores within individual classes. An example of this disparity is seen in table three. The table displays the average scores of students in a class as compared to the scores of instructor of that class. The students' scores are indicated by the line of x's (the o being the median), the instructor's scores are plotted over the students' and connected by a solid line.

VALUE SYSTEMS

MEANING ORIENTED

Self directed, independent, autonomous these students need little assistance from the instructor. They tend to be goal oriented - but usually only towards goals they themselves have set. Sometimes a problem for instructors because Meaning Oriented students do not follow rules well. Their favorite question when given instructions is "why?". Loners, they prefer independent study to group work.

SCIENTIFIC

Creative, achievement oriented, flexible - these students like competition. They learn best in an unstructured environment where they can set their own goals. They will work hard at a task they have set themselves but are less motivated by others. They will tend to "con" others into doing their work for them if the work is uninteresting to them. They are not trouble makers in class but do tend to bend the rules as far as the instructor will allow.

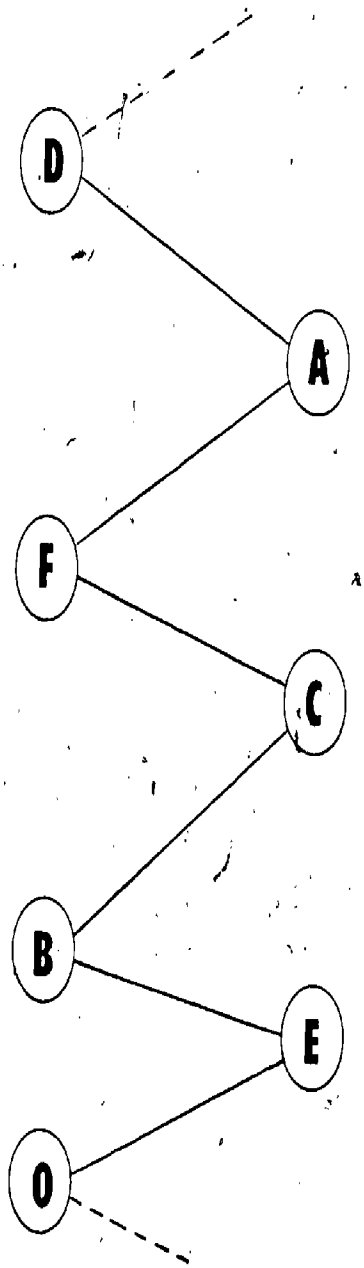
INDIVIDUALISTIC

Assertive, aggressive, stubborn - these students, although creative cause considerable problems for the teacher. They are often unwilling to follow rules. They demand much personal recognition from peers and will go to great lengths to get it. They work best by themselves - but still need a firm instructor to keep them at the task.

REACTIVE

Not found in school situations.

*Based on the theoretical concepts of Clare W. Graves



Value System Analysis represents a new approach to understanding student/teacher behavior and learning styles. V.S.A. assumes that all people are o.k. - though they prefer different study environments and methods.

GROUP ORIENTED

Idealistic, personalistic, sensitive to others - these students like small group work and lots of interaction in class. They are concerned with social causes and need to feel that the subject they are studying relates to the real world of people in some way. They respond well to the "buddy/friend" type of instructor who creates a warm atmosphere in class.

STRUCTURED

Serious, punctual, hard-working - these students believe in the system of education. They expect rules, assignments and tests. Grades are important. Such students do not like ambiguity or frequent change. They respond well to organized instructors who are well versed in their content area.

TRADITION ORIENTED

Ritualistic, follower, security oriented - these students look to the instructor to provide answers and directions. They work best when much reinforcement is provided by the instructor. Self-study is difficult as is any situation that is ambiguous. Frequent change is very hard for tradition oriented students to deal with. They relate well to instructors who are paternalistic or maternalistic.

STUDENTS

	LOW	:	AVERAGE	:	HIGH
TRADITION ORIENTED	7	11	16	23	30
INDIVIDUALISTIC	7	12	17	22	27
STRUCTURED	5	9	12	15	19
SCIENTIFIC	13	18	25	33	42
GROUP ORIENTED	0	0	3	7	12
MEANING ORIENTED	8	13	18	23	28
	10th	25th	50th	75th	90th

Table 1

TEACHERS

	LOW	:	AVERAGE	:	HIGH
TRADITION ORIENTED	13	17	23	32	39
INDIVIDUALISTIC	7	13	18	22	27
STRUCTURED	5	8	11	15	18
SCIENTIFIC	10	20	26	33	38
GROUP ORIENTED	0	0	2	4	5
MEANING ORIENTED	4	9	12	17	20
	10th	25th	50th	75th	90th

Table 2

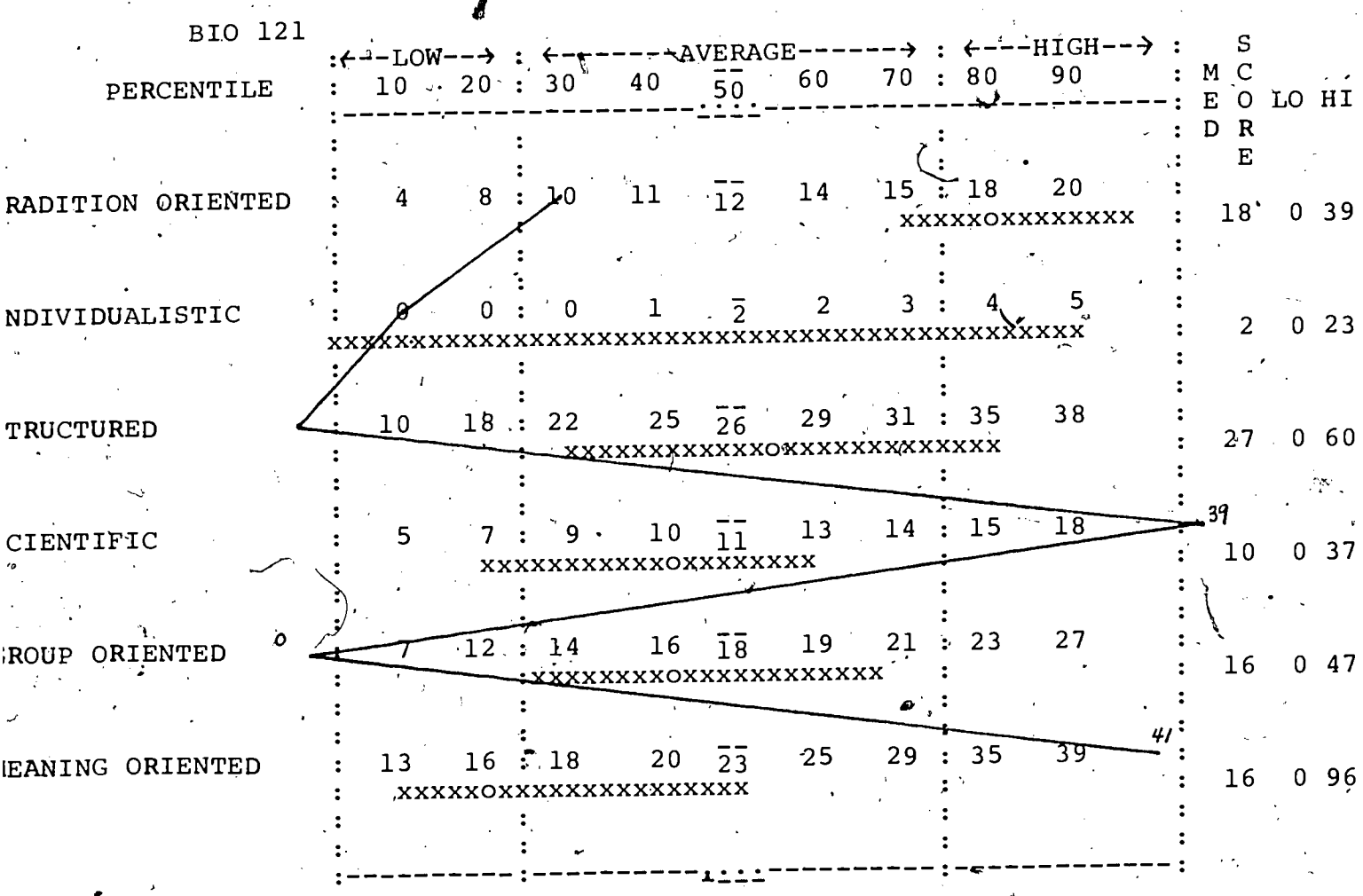


Table 3

The conflicts caused by values as different as those illustrated in table three can result in little or no learning taking place in the classroom. In this case the instructor of the biology class was Meaning-Oriented and Scientific. As such he believed students could and should figure out things for themselves. He was involved in the subject matter he taught and had interests he was researching on his own. He assumed everyone was as curious and interested as he was in biology - therefore in class he presented intriguing problems but spent little time on routine information that could be found easily in the text. If students did not understand a point, he assumed that they would ask or seek the answers for themselves.

He was teaching students who were structured. The scores in table three indicate that they expected a course outline, frequent tests, regular assignments and standard grading procedures. They received little of this from the "free wheeling" style of this biology teacher.

The students assumed that he would plan for them so that they would be assured of learning what they needed to know. He assumed that the students would take the initiative to learn what they were curious about. The consequences were that very little learning took place except for those few students at the upper range of the levels of "Scientific" and "Meaning-Oriented".

A second example illustrated in table four shows an instructor who is much more structured than are the students. This instructor taught "by-the-book". He moved chapter by chapter through the text giving regular assignments and tests. It was important to him that students left his class well prepared for higher level chemistry at a university. He was aware that some students (those who scored higher in Meaning-Oriented) might have individual projects they were interested in pursuing - but he felt that covering the basics thoroughly was his major responsibility, leaving little time for individual interests. He was unaware that some of the students (those who score higher in Group-Oriented and Tradition-Oriented) would have preferred to work in groups rather than listen to lectures. The values of this class were less mismatched than those in table three. Undoubtedly learning took place, however by modifying his instructional techniques to accommodate the value levels of his students, this instructor could have accomplished much more.

The third example given in table five shows a fairly even match of instructor and students. The instructor in this drafting class is highly Tradition-Oriented as are his students. Both students and teacher score low on Group-Oriented and Meaning -Oriented.

The teaching methodology of this instructor was to carefully demonstrate how to do each task. He then moved around the room observing as students attempted an exact duplication of his performance. He stopped frequently at students' stations to praise an effort or correct a mistake. Often he might do a small portion of the students' tasks himself in an effort to assist. The students responded well to his teaching - asking frequent questions and relying on him for assurance that they were performing correctly. They did not learn how to become independent learners nor how to be more self-sufficient as draftsmen, but they did learn drafting well.

The situation illustrated in table five was not frequent in the study, most instructor scores when graphed over class averages showed considerable differences between value levels. There were however, a few cases where it appeared that students and teacher had matched themselves advantageously.

A possible explanation for this matching, at least in the case of drafting, might be that the type of persons interested in either taking or teaching drafting would be similiar. However, in some cases matching occurred that could not be accounted for with the above explanation. For example, the averages for students in two history classes, one section taught by a Structured Instructor and one section

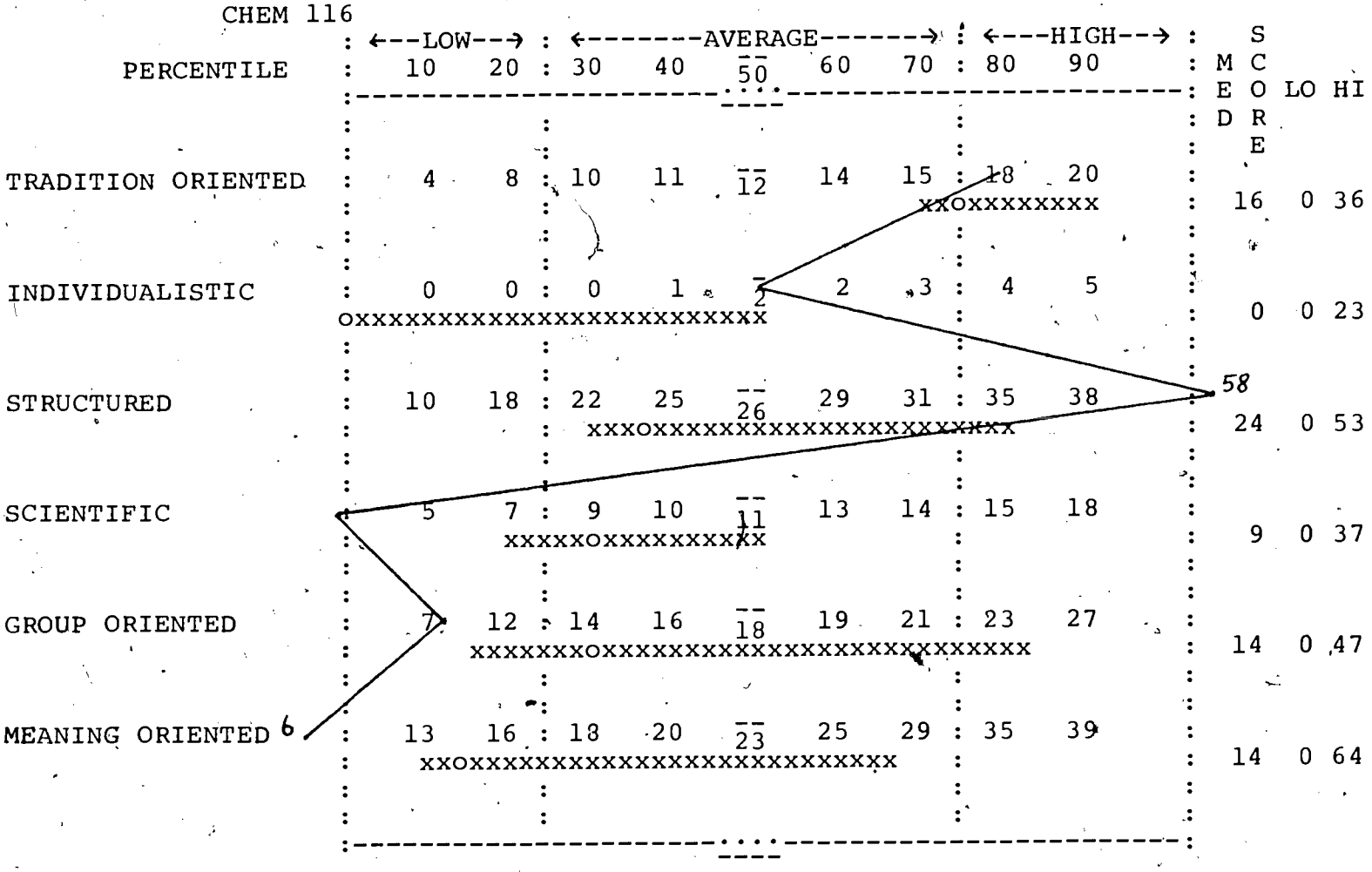


Table 4

taught by a Group-Oriented Instructor, showed that the students in the classes matched that instructor's particular values. Since the students of the college generally carry full workloads outside of school they usually do not select classes on the basis of instructor but select classes that will correspond with their schedules. Yet in the case of the two history instructors, instructor selection appeared to have happened.

Another explanation that might apply to both examples given is that the students changed during the semester to become more like the instructor. Much further research in this area needs to be done using the Values for Learning questionnaire in pre-post situations.

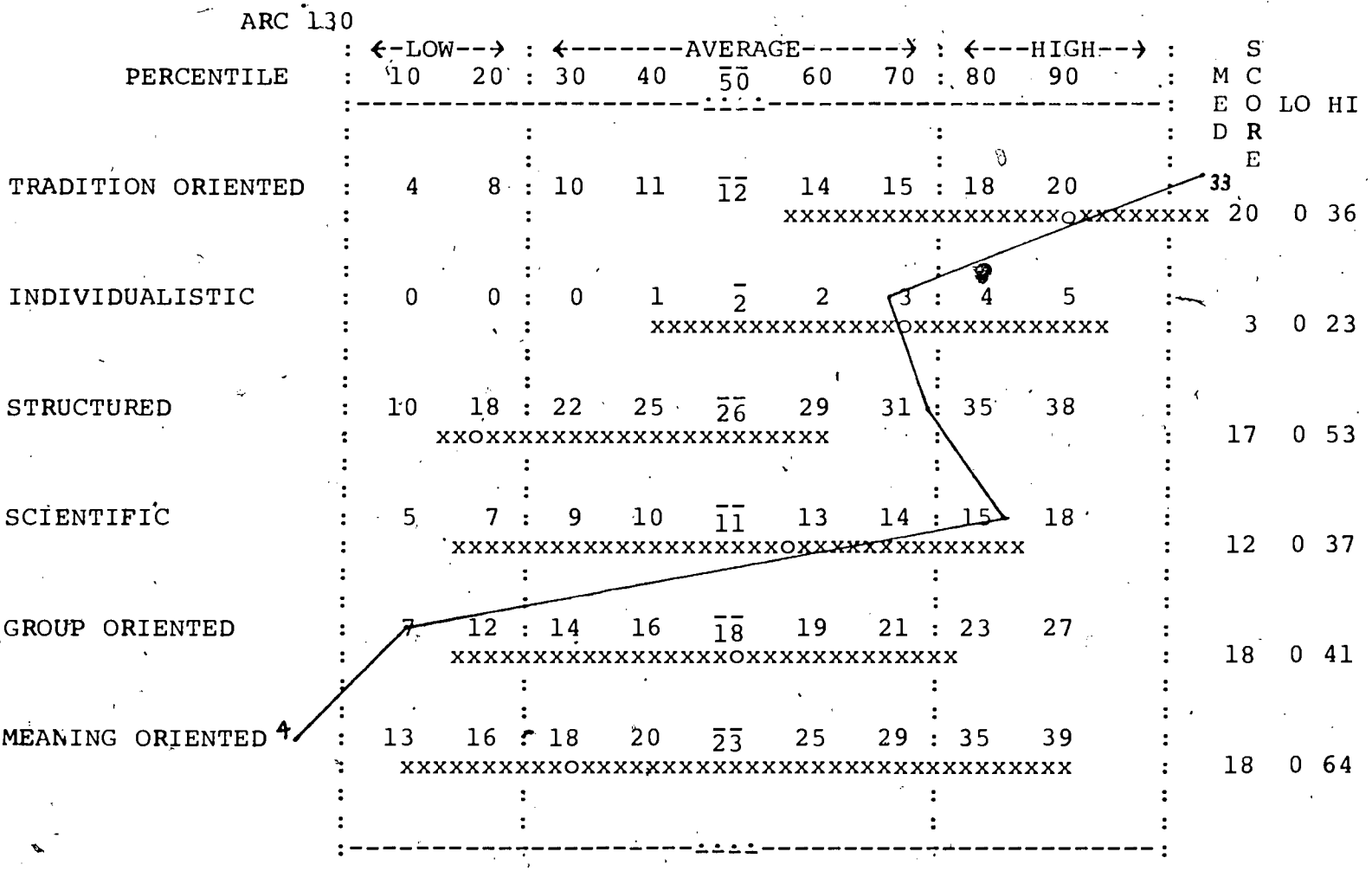


Table 5

The theory of value levels was explained to all participating instructors in a 2 - 3 hour slide type presentation. Instructors plotted their own scores over the graphs of student norms for the college and over the averages for their own classes. Seeing such profiles of themselves and their classes, instructors often modified their teaching style to accommodate student expectations. Comments from instructors reflected this desire to change teaching methods.

"It (understanding value levels) certainly has explained why some plans haven't worked."

"It has reduced some inner conflict for me between my expectations for student behavior and the reality in regard to self-directedness, making learning choices, independent study."

"It has explained why our students need more structure than I have wanted to provide ...".

"It has made me aware of the differences in learning styles that exist within my classes and has made me anxious to explore ways of individualizing the instruction in my classes".

The continued interest in values for learning as expressed by the faculty members led the author to conclude that considerable impact on teaching had been achieved. However, it became evident that instructors needed more clear cut guidelines as to how to adjust teaching techniques for each level. (It might be noted that the instructors themselves averaged a higher score at the Structured level than at any other level - thus explaining their desire for more definite guidelines.) To satisfy this need a study was conducted the next year to attempt to identify the styles of learning most useful to students at each value level. Two hundred students were asked to fill out the values questionnaire used in the previous study and in addition were asked to respond to a questionnaire that listed fifteen methods of learning. (See page 11). On the "methods of learning" questionnaire students were asked to indicate on a five point scale, the degree to which they enjoyed each method and the degree to which they learned from each method. These responses were then correlated with the scores on the Values for Learning questionnaire. A Pearson-Product Moment correlation was used to compute the scores. Although no strong correlations were identified the most meaningful correlations are listed below.

Meaning-Oriented, level 7 students do not think they learn well from lecture. $R = -0.234$

Meaning-Oriented, level 7 students do not think they learn well from talking individually with the instructor. $R = -0.224$

Meaning-Oriented, level 7 students think they learn well from individual research. $R = 0.272$

Meaning-Oriented, level 7 students do not think they learn well from case study. $R = -0.332$

Group-Oriented, level 6 students think they learn well from CAI. $R = 0.268$

Structured, level 4 students think they learn well from lectures. $R = 0.268$

Structured, level 4 students think they learn well from small group discussion. $R = 0.273$

Tradition-Oriented, level 2 students think they learn well from talking individually with the instructor. R = 0.227

Tradition-Oriented, level 2 students do not think they learn well from role play. R = 0.213

Tradition-Oriented, level 2 students think they learn well from meditation. R = 0.365

It was concluded from the low correlations that value level alone would not predict preferred learning style in a manner useful to instructors. It is possible that the use of value level plus cognitive style would produce an instrument that would identify appropriate teaching methodology and study skills for each value level. Further study in this area is underway.

FURTHER STUDY

Research related to Values for Learning has raised a number of questions important for education to address. Armed with the knowledge that students exist at differing value levels, and with a means to identify those levels instructors may choose either to teach in a manner that rewards students for moving up the "existential ladder" (i.e. toward Meaning-Oriented) or use this knowledge for the purpose of better teaching the content area for which they are responsible. Graves assures us that no level is "better" than any other, however he also points out that people who have moved up the "existential ladder" have more behavioral options than those at the lower end. Group-Oriented or Meaning-Oriented have more ways of learning that they can utilize than students who need more direction as Tradition-Oriented and Structured students do.

Education has in the past taught structured values, i.e. hard work, following the rules, respecting teachers. Often educators teaching their own values were unaware that their expectations of students were value laden. It is probably not possible to teach in any manner that does not reflect some value level. The question is, to what use should we put the information that Values for Learning provides us, teaching values, teaching content, or both.

A final question deals with levels that extend beyond "Meaning-Oriented". Graves says humankind will continue to develop new value levels, and in fact individuals already exist in our school systems that reflect these higher levels. How shall we provide instruction for such students?

Listed below are 15 types of learning experiences and three columns for your response. In column one place a check mark by each learning experience you have tried. In column two and three use the numbers 1,2,3,4,5, to indicate how much you enjoyed and learned from the experiences. You need to mark columns 2 and 3 for those experiences checked in column one.

ENJOYED

1 = didn't enjoy
2 enjoyed a little
3 average enjoyment
4 enjoyed a lot
5 most enjoyable learning

LEARNED

1 = learned nothing
2 learned a little
3 learned average amount
4 learned a lot
5 learned best

	I TRIED	II ENJOYED	III LEARNED
1. Listen to the teacher lecture in class.	___	___	___
2. Participate in small group discussion (3-10 persons)	___	___	___
3. Read a text or assignment.	___	___	___
4. View a film or filmstrip.	___	___	___
5. Talk with the teacher alone about the subject.	___	___	___
6. Discuss the subject with a fellow student alone.	___	___	___
7. Use programmed instruction or work book type materials by yourself.	___	___	___
8. Participate in a role play situation in class.	___	___	___
9. Have another person tutor you.	___	___	___
10. Listen to an audio tape cassette.	___	___	___
11. Do individual research, on your own, in the library.	___	___	___
12. Computer assisted instruction.	___	___	___
13. Take a television course, program and study guide.	___	___	___
14. Problem solve using a case study.	___	___	___
15. Meditate. (TM, Yoga)	___	___	___

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